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Committee on Natural Resources
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Item 2 of the provisional agenda
Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Provisional agenda

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2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
3. Activities of the United Nations system in the field of water and mineral resources, and inter-agency coordination.
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Annotations

1. Election of officers

In accordance with rule 26 of the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council, the Committee, as a subsidiary body of the Council, shall elect its officers. The Committee may wish to elect four officers: a Chairman, two Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur.

2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

The provisional agenda and documentation for the fourth session of the Committee were approved by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 1996/306.

The proposed organizational arrangements for the work of the Committee, as approved by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1992/62, are set our below.

The following agenda items will be dealt with in plenary meetings: the election of officers (item 1); the adoption of the agenda (item 2); issues related to activities of the United Nations system in the fields of water and mineral resources and inter-agency coordination (item 3); and issues related to assessment and management of land and water resources on an integrated basis (item 5) and global land monitoring programme (item 9), which concern both water and mineral resources. For the remaining items, the Committee will break up into two working groups: the Working Group on Water Resources (to discuss item 4) and the Working Group on Mineral Resources (to discuss items 6, 7, 8 and 10). Items 11 and 12 will also be considered in plenary meetings.

3. Activities of the United Nations system in the field of water and mineral resources, and inter-agency coordination

At its third session, the Committee noted with appreciation the valuable overviews provided to it in both minerals and the water sectors, as well as the reports submitted by United Nations organizations and bodies and the regional commissions, and requested the Secretary-General to provide similar overview reports for the Committee at its fourth session.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on technical cooperation activities of the United Nations system in mineral resources (E/C.7/1998/2)

Report of the Secretary-General on state-of-the-art environmental technologies for the utilization and reprocessing of mineral industry wastes (E/C.7/1998/3)

4. Review of actions implemented by Governments following the consideration by the General Assembly of the comprehensive global water assessment

At its third session, the Committee took note with appreciation of the report of the Secretary-General on the state of the freshwater resources of the world, and requested the Secretary-General, in close cooperation with organs and organizations of the United Nations system, to prepare a report on follow-up to the comprehensive assessment of the freshwater resources of the world, including methodological questions arising from the characterization of vulnerability and problem areas in assessing the freshwater resources of the world, for consideration at its fourth session.

Documentation

The report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to the comprehensive assessment of the freshwater resources of the world will be presented in the form of a note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of an expert group meeting on strategic approaches to freshwater management and a note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the High-level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development for the 1997 review of the Rio commitments, entitled "Critical issues and policies for sustainable development: energy, transport and water" (E/CN.17/1997/17/Add.1).

5. Issues related to assessment and management of land and water resources on an integrated basis

At its third session, *inter alia*, the Committee requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, to prepare a report on issues related to the spatial planning of land resources, including mineral resources, and water resources, taking into account urban and rural development needs and food security requirements, as well as the protection of ecosystems.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on issues related to the spatial planning of land (including minerals) and water resources (E/C.7/1998/5)

6. Environmental protection and restoration issues arising from mineral industry activities

At its third session, the Committee noted with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General on key advances in the development and application of state-of-the-art technologies for minimizing the degradation caused by the mining and processing of mineral resources. The Committee also encouraged the development of the role of the United Nations system, through the Secretariat, as a focal point for the collection and dissemination of information on environmentally friendly technologies on a continuous basis, and requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Committee at its fourth session a report on the development and application of state-of-the-art technologies for the utilization/reprocessing of mineral industry wastes with the aim of reducing the ecological burden on the environment.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on state-of-the-art environmental technologies for the utilization and reprocessing of mineral industry wastes (E/C.7/1998/3)

7. Issues related to the social and economic impacts of the mining sector, especially in developing countries and economies in transition

At its third session, the Committee recalled that in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, it was pointed out that the situation of most developing countries, particularly Africa and the least developed countries, was critical and required special attention and action, and that countries with economies in transition also required the support of the international community. Noting that the mining sector was of considerable potential importance for narrowing the economic gap between developed and developing countries although it had not so far realized that potential in some mining economies, the Committee decided that the basic problem of improving the capacity of developing countries and economies in transition to capture the maximum sustainable economic and social benefits

of their potential for mineral production should be the principal focus of its inter-sessional activities and of the agenda of its fourth session, and requested the Secretary-General to prepare a discussion paper on that topic, with the assistance of the members of the Committee.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on the basic problem of improving the capacity of developing countries and economies in transition to capture the maximum economic and social benefits of their potential for mineral production (E/C.7/1998/4)

8. Authoritative technological assessment of progress towards the sustainable extraction and utilization of minerals

At its third session, noting the compelling evidence that the current trends of increasing use of both metallic and non-metallic minerals were unsustainable in terms of both supply and environmental impacts and the more limited but developing independent initiatives that were currently being undertaken in that field by various organizations, including the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Committee recommended that those bodies, in the light of the inter-sessional strategy paper of the Committee entitled "Towards the sustainable supply of minerals in the context of Agenda 21", consult together and with appropriate governmental and non-governmental organizations with a view to forging a partnership to fulfill the proposed technological functions in a comprehensive and authoritative way. The organizations mentioned above have been requested to make oral presentations to the Committee.

9. Global land monitoring programme

At its third session, *inter alia*, the Committee recognized that a complementary global land quality monitoring programme, which would constitute the land quality component of the Global Environmental Monitoring System, would be highly relevant to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), with its role as lead agency in the coordination of integrated land management under Agenda 21, and recommended that FAO, the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNEP consult together in the light of the inter-sessional strategy paper of the Committee entitled "Towards the sustainable supply of minerals in the context of Agenda 21", the blueprint produced by the International Geochemical Mapping Project, and experience with the Global Water Quality Monitoring Programme of the Global Environmental Monitoring System with a view to formulating a plan for cooperation with national agencies in order to develop a global geochemical database. The organizations mentioned above have been requested to make oral presentations to the Committee.

10. Global knowledge base on mineral resource potential

At its third session, *inter alia*, the Committee endorsed the need for a global knowledge base on mineral resources potential in terms of potential source areas to be developed so that it could be integrated with other land-use information as an essential part of an integrated approach to the planning and management of natural resources, and recommended that the United Nations Secretariat, in consultation with FAO, the regional commissions and the international mining industry, consider the detailed requirements of such a knowledge base in the light of the inter-sessional strategy paper of the Committee entitled "Towards the

sustainable supply of minerals in the context of Agenda 21", as well as propose ways in which such a knowledge base might be achieved, including initiation through a regional pilot project. Some information on a global knowledge base on mineral resource potential is contained in document E/C.7/1998/2.

11. Provisional agenda for the fifth session of the Committee

12. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fourth session